Synopsis Entitled

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON FERTILITY AND MORTALITY AMONG THE TEA GARDEN LABOUR COMMUNITY OF DIBRUGARH DISTRICT, ASSAM

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1) Introduction:

In the field of demography, fertility is that positive force through which the population expands counteracting the force of mortality. The population growth of the developed countries is determined by and large by the fertility trend only, because the mortality rates have reached almost their biological minimum in those countries. In these developing countries also mortality has declined substantially as a result of which the effective control of epidemic diseases and the implementation of public health measures by the government.

The study of fertility and mortality are essential due to their fundamental determinants of the population growth and also for understanding of human population. The number of births and the number of deaths in a given population during a specified length of time, usually one year, gives the natural increase or decrease of the population. Fertility replenishes the society while mortality on the other hand is a form of attrition.

The study of fertility and mortality in rural population are important for formulating and implementing better health care because they are exposed to various types of health hazards which are leading to higher mortality due to lack of modern health care and nutritional facilities. Infant mortality is considered to be a sensitive index for understanding the general health status and physical living standard of life of a community or country.

Although human reproduction is essentially a biological phenomenon, it is greatly influenced by ecological as well as socio cultural factors. It has been observed that the levels and patterns of fertility as well as mortality vary considerably in various sub-groups/sub-samples of the same population. A

study of differential fertility and mortality is useful in identifying the factors which determines fertility and mortality levels among various sub-groups. The important ecological, socio-cultural and biological proximate determinants which can influence the pregnancy outcome is reported to be rural –urban habitation, family types, religion, mother's education, age at menarche, duration of breast feeding, maternal age at conception, birth order etc. It is reported that fertility rates are influenced by child health care and nutritional status and health of the mother. It is generally believed that malnutrition produced increase morbidity leading to excessive mortality in infant and young children as a result of which fertility remains high and population growth is excessive.

Historical Account Of The Tea Garden Labour Community In Assam:

The settlement of the tea garden labour community is a historical event. In the early part of the 19th century the large areas where tea-estates (tea garden) were established later on were covered by thick forests inhabited by wild animals. Being informed of the existence of tea-plants in the jungle of Assam in 1823, Robert Bruce, a British official made an agreement with a chingpho-chief for supplying tea-seedlings from the chingpho areas and started plantation work. The brother of Robert Bruce, who became the supridentendal of forests in 1836 (Gait, 1984:354) discovered "tea-nurseries" in Sadia and brought tea seeds from their and began tea-cultivation in Joypur and then in Chabua in upper assam in 1837 with Chinese tea-seeds. This Chabua is known as the first tea-estate in Assam (Griffith, 1967:109 and Kurmi, 1981:5). Gradually tea cultivation began to spread with establishment of tea-estates at Chotatingrai, Sukan Pukhuri, Dinjoy, Deohal, Chinimora and Chingpho (Bhuyan, 1960:2-5, phukan, 1979:16-18, Kurmi, 1981:5-6). In founding tea industry in Assam the planters faced two major problems firstly the area was covered with thick and unhealthy forest which had to be cleared. Secondly, there was an almost total absence of roads, as the excellent road system of Ahom kings had all but vanished from neglect

during the civil wars at the end of 18th century and the beginning of 19th century (Phukan, 1979:19) which created great difficulties for transport and communication. Thirdly there was an inadequate supply of labourers as the local Assamese population didn't get incentive to work as labourers due to low wedge and hazardous conditions of work due to presence of disease and wild animals in jungle, for which C.A. Bruce considered the local people inefficient for work in tea gardens and decided to bring workers from outside Assam (Bhuyan, 1960: pp 2-5, phukan, 1979:19-20, kurmi, 1981:5). The British planters began to import labours through agents' starting from 1840which continued for over a 100 years during which huge labour population migrated into Assam to work in tea-plantation. The labourers migrated to Assam mainly from places like Brahampur and Puruliya of Bengal; Ranch, Chotanagpur and Hazaribagh of Bihar; Bilashpur, Chibacha, Chambalpur, Jagadalpur and Domka of Orissa; Joshpur of Madhya Pradesh; Vigianagram of Madras (Tamil Nadu) and Nasik of Maharashtra (kurmi,1981:2;Jossa,1986:1166) . Mostly the migrant labourers' were recruited on contract for a particular period of time to work in the tea-gardens. After the expiry the contracted period they had to go back.

In the beginning they had to make adjustment in the new end entirely different climate and geographical conditions. A good number of them suffered from climate maladjustment and diseases and some of them died. Out of 84,915 labourers' brought to Assam from different parts of during 1841-1863, more than 30,000 labourers died of diseases during 1863-1966(Kurmi, 1993:15-16). A major section of the group however survived and had gradually been making its mind to settle permanently in the new place far away from their homes and places of origin. Descendants of the original migrants were very uncertain in their knowledge about the native villages of their forefather. Most of them have forgotten their native dialects and have given up many of their traditional customs.

As tea labourers were recruited from different parts of India, they came with different socio- cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Hence, different sub-castes and tribes are found to be present today within the greatest fold of the tea labour community of Assam (Crowford: 1924, Bhuyan: 1960, Gohain: 1974, Kar: 1981, Bhowmik: 1982 and Kurmi: 1990).

Though there are distinct differences in their socio-cultural life, they are taken as one group of people characterized by their similar type of habitat, style of living, occupation and identification in the green tea-valleys of Assam. A gradual process of socio-cultural integration started among them and keeping aside their social and cultural differences of their places of origin they tried to identify themselves as one single tea-labour community.(Sarma; 2003).

Research Title: A Sociological Study On Fertility And Mortality Among The Tea Garden Labours Of Dibrugarh, Assam

2) Origin of the Research Problem:

Fertility is the natural capability to produce offspring. The main factors depend on fertility are sexual behavior, nutrition, culture, consanguinity, instinct, way of life, economical condition, timing and emotions. In demographic context fertility refers to the actual production of offspring rather than the physical capability to produce which is termed as fecundity. One can measure fertility but fecundity cannot be measured.

Fertility and mortality has emerged hand in hand with the establishment of human society and it has it's momentousness since time immemorial. Initially when people started forming groups for hunting and food gathering, they had the fundamental idea of fertility and mortality in mind. Gradually they started to know the importance of it, which is the basic foundation of human society. In the above context one can highlight the famous sculpture of Venus of

Willendorf which was made in 30,000 B.C, which indicate the importance of fertility in that of primitive society.

Several studies on various aspects of fertility and mortality conducted among the varied ethnic group of north east India. In this connection, mention may be made of the following publication: Nag(1965), Deka Mahapatra(1970), work among the khasis, while Boruah(1983) studied the Hajong of Meghalaya; Bhowmik et:al(1971) reported the fertility rate from among the Zemi women of Nagaland; Sharma and Kar(1985) studied the Wancho and Baruah(1986) studied the Dirang Monpa of Arunachal Pradesh; Das et:al(1980) reported information on fertility and mortality from among the Ahom, Mishing, Deori,Chutia and Morang population of Asaam. The Bio-Social profile of several Assamese Hindu castes and Muslims has also been studied by Das et:al. Fertility and Mortality differential among the Khamiyang and Turang population of Assam was recorded by Das(1985). Sengupta-Chakravarty(1995) recorded impact of maternal age and birth order on fertility among the Ahom of Assam.

Studies on fertility and mortality components of North-East Indian population involving their bio-social proximate determinants are conspicuous by their absence. It is thus in recognition of their limitations, an attempt has been made in the present research work to study some aspects of fertility and mortality components among tea-garden labours, a numerically large Assamese migrated population of Brahmaputra valley of Assam, against the background of few socio-cultural proximate determinants.

3) Significance of The Study:

Every research work is an addition to the body of existing knowledge. From this point of view each study has its own significance. Already many historians and researchers have studied different issues regarding tea garden

labourers. But their researches are related to social, historical and socio-economic matters. But none has touched upon the mortality and fertility aspect. So, this research will have great significance for social research in the present day context.

4) Objectives :

1 The initial objectives of the present study has been concerned with the collection of fertility and mortality data which includes number of conception, miscarriage, live births, still births, pre-reproductive mortality etc from the tea- garden labour population of Assam and their statistical analysis and interpretation from the point of view of descriptive demography.

2 Another objective of the present study is to find out the fertility and mortality rates against the background of socio-cultural determinants like, family type, age at marriage, maternal education, etc. of tea-garden labour women.

3 Finally an attempt has also been made to evaluate comparison between the present tea garden labour sample with other neighboring population groups of Brahmaputra Valley of Assam with regards to few fertility and mortality components.

5) Hypothesis:

With the aid of the objectives reasonable hypothesis can be developed to explain fertility and mortality of tea garden laborers community of Dibrugarh

1. Age at marriage and fertility performance are closely related. Lower the age at marriage, higher the fertility rate.
2. Education and fertility performance are closely related to each other. The higher the educational level of the spouses, the lower fertility rates.

3. Type of the family influences the reproductive behavior. Couples from nuclear families tend to have fewer children..
4. Economic status specially the level of affluence has a direct bearing on fertility and mortality rates. Higher economic condition has a lower rate of fertility.
5. In a same community if they are practicing different religion fertility rate may vary.

6) Methodology:

The study would be carried out through inductive, deductive and empirical approaches. This work includes the following stages of study.

- Field work for primary data collection.
- Library work for secondary data collection.
- Statistical interpretation.

6.1 Scope of Research Study:

This research work is confined to Dibrugarh District where there is large concentration of tea garden. Undivided Dibrugarh District have the largest number of tea labours (32%) of the total tea labours in Assam (Saharia U C 2005) and has provided opportunity to study the population variables required for this study. The present investigation is conduct on the tea garden labour population inhabiting in three different tea gardens of Dibrugarh District, Assam. The entire data on reproductive performance will collected from 350 ever-married tea garden labour women (which is around 0.1% of total population). The investigation will carried out from July 2019 to December 2019 (six months).

6.2 Limitation of Research Study:

Data on pregnancy outcome will collect by in interviewing the women

through fertility investigation schedule. For the determination of age we may have to estimate in few cases with reference to some important local event. There for the incident of recall lapses cannot be totally being ignored.

6.3 Research Design:

For this study we have to collect both qualitative as well as quantitative data. For this research we have to take both While interviewing tea garden labour women, the detail reproductive histories i.e. number of offspring living or dead, miscarriage and still–birth besides the sex and age of the living and dead children have been collected. Apart from these, mother's education, occupation, age at menarche, age at marriage etc. will also be collected as it is purported to have an effect on reproductive performance of women. For the proposed research, it is necessary to frame an Exploratory Research Design to run the research in a proper way.

6.4 Sampling Method:

In social research sampling method has acquired a place of great importance. Sampling is the selection of certain percentage of a group items according to a pre determined plan. For the selection of respondent researcher will use random sampling method and the selection will come from sequential list.

6.5 Technique of Data Collection:

For primary data collection researcher used interview schedule method. Women whose husband are alive and have at least one child are only interviewed. The collected data will be tabulated and analyzed with different indicators. Secondary data will be collected from libraries, related offices and Government Departments.

6.6 Classification, Analysis and Finding of Data collection:

Classification is the process of arranging data in groups or classes according to their resemblance or affinities. The data collected by the investigator after interview or observation is in its raw form. In order to make the collected data useful for research, the researcher arranges the data on the merit of its similarities. The collected data will be tabulated by different headings like; reproductive performance according to maternal age, fertility and mortality among tea garden labour according to family type distribution of pregnancy outcomes of tea garden labour and other neighboring population groups of Assam etc. The classified data will be analyzed in different parameters. After the classification of the data the frequencies and the values of different categories and classes of data become clear and comparative study becomes possible. One can verify the hypothesis with the findings of analyzed data. Interpretation of data always leads to conclusion.

6.7 Report Writing:

The report is the description of what has been done during the period of study or research. Report or study of research has to contain certain things. The subject matter of report may be classified under the following topics.

Topic No. 1): Introduction

Topic No. 2): Review of Literature

Topic No. 3): Research Methodology

Topic No. 4): Data Analysis

Topic No. 5): Finding and conclusion

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